

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

[From the Coeur d'Alene Press](#)

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[From the Spokesman-Review](#)

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- ISU braces for further cuts in state spending
- We're broke; now, about that med school (Editorial)

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FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

ISU braces for further cuts in state spending

Associated Press

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

POCATELLO - Idaho State University will heavily scrutinize hiring and other costs while bracing for the possibility of more cuts in state spending, a finance administrator on the Pocatello campus says.

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ISU responded to Otter's September directive with a \$1.8 million holdback in spending.

University administrators are writing plans to deal with potential 5 percent and 7.5 percent holdbacks, the Idaho State Journal reports. The 5 percent holdback would amount to \$3.8 million of the university's \$77.3 million yearly budget, while the 7.5 percent would total \$5.5 million.

The university also is looking to clamp down on phone and equipment costs, meals and gifts employees expense to the school and the number of faculty members being sent to conferences,

Fletcher said. Last year, 23 university employees attended a conference in San Francisco when fewer could have gone and saved money, he said.

We're broke; now, about that med school (Editorial)

Jim Fisher

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Monday, Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas and his vice president of finance and administration told members of the school's faculty to prepare for further spending cuts as shrinking revenues increase the likelihood of more state spending holdbacks.

Today, Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas is scheduled to present a special legislative committee with a business plan for a new Idaho medical school.

You read that right: The same chief executive who is warning his troops of future belt tightening in existing programs is recommending creation of not just a new program, but a new school, to members of the state House and Senate. Both moves were reported in separate stories in the Idaho State Journal of Pocatello.

What's going on here?

Yes, the idea of Idaho having its own medical school, instead of funneling students into a cooperative program with the University of Washington, was born during better economic times. But even then, the odds that a cheapskate state would authorize a new school were near those that Ron Paul would be elected president of the United States.

Today, the entire notion seems laughable.

The proposal might have had some parochial support from conservative southeastern Idaho legislators who otherwise would scoff at it, but who can take it seriously today? The decline in state government's tax collections is only the beginning of what promises to be a long, grim economic recession for the entire nation. What looked like a pipe dream now appears something that could be induced only by means of a syringe.

In fairness to Vailas and other supporters, the school they suggest follows a so-called distributive model that has faculty members training students at existing university campuses and hospitals, rather than at a new campus built from the ground up. But even that would represent a significant addition to state higher education spending.

During their meeting with the faculty, Vailas and James Fletcher said almost 70 vacant positions at ISU might be left unfilled as administrators wait to hear from Gov. Butch Otter about additions to the 1 percent spending holdback he already ordered. They said they are looking at

two potential scenarios, one a 5 percent holdback affecting \$3.8 million of the school's \$77.3 annual budget, and another of 7.5 percent, or \$5.5 million.

Might we presume that somewhere along the line there will be another holdback - on writing plans for new professional schools?

It isn't as if even this planning is cost-free. The Legislature has already spent \$300,000 on a feasibility study for the school, and meetings of special legislative committees do not take place without expenses of their own.

If Otter is unwilling to halt the drive toward a new med school, can't he at least put it on blocks for the foreseeable future? - J.F.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

ISU braces for more cuts in state spending

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Fletcher was among university administrators who met with faculty on Monday to discuss future cuts they are prepared to make if there are additional state spending reductions.

"We want to be in the position that, if the cutback is worse, we have already done the planning," Fletcher said.

University administrators are writing plans to deal with potential 5 percent and 7.5 percent holdbacks, the Idaho State Journal reports. The 5 percent holdback would amount to \$3.8 million of the university's \$77.3 million yearly budget, while the 7.5 percent would total \$5.5 million.

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Fletcher said. Last year, 23 university employees attended a conference in San Francisco when fewer could have gone and saved money, he said.

"What we would like to do is get through this economic crisis without sending out pink slips," Fletcher said.

University President Arthur Vailas said he plans to give faculty monthly updates on the school's financial status.

"Some people are going to have to tighten because they're on the verge of crossing that line," Vailas said Monday.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Tom Ryder: It is time to invest in a medical school (Editorial)

GUEST EDITORIAL AN IDAHO MEDICAL SCHOOL

This week, we are turning over space on the Opinion page to four local leaders, who are former community representatives on the Statesman editorial board. They will share their expertise and viewpoints on topics of their choosing.

- Idaho Statesman

Edition Date: 11/12/08

The Idaho Statesman is a leading advocate for planning in the Treasure Valley. Its Vision for the Valley series is successfully drafting a framework of how we want our Valley to prosper. The theme for their work is described in the title of the project a Vision for the future a dream of what we can be.

In one specific area, however, the editorial board has been less than visionary - the need for and the potential of medical education as a driving force for positive change. The board has taken the shortsighted position that a medical school for Idaho is too expensive, a second-rate option and premature. Their position is based upon the significant cost of a medical school, the success of cooperative programs with the universities of Washington and Utah and the competing need for funds for other education programs. I believe they are missing the point and selling us short.

Medicine, medical technology and bioresearch will be the most important growth sector in the U.S. economy over the next 50 years. A medical school is more than merely a place to educate Idaho doctors; it is a breeding ground for advanced research, and it would act as a catalyst and "incubator" for development of an entirely new industry to help drive economic growth in a way that is clean, safe and profitable.

Detractors like to suggest that a new Idaho medical school could not replace the quality of education that Idaho medical students get at the two bordering schools. These schools are first-

rate but the conclusion that a small, specialized, less expensive and new option means low quality and underachieving is just not accurate. One very successful model that Idaho could emulate is the Sanford School of Medicine at the University of South Dakota, a state with half the population of Idaho.

Yes, South Dakota has a medical school, but not just to provide an inexpensive and second-rate option for students. Instead, it has earned a reputation as being a top medical educational institution specializing in rural family practice. Sounds like what Idahoans want and need today. Last month the school dedicated a \$37 million medical research and education facility that is breathtaking in scope, purpose and mission. The Sanford school has a 100-year history and during that time has graduated 3,000 doctors, with almost 50 percent staying in South Dakota.

Let's not postpone this critical need, because that merely delays the achievement of our goals and increases the cost of success. The University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine is now a premier medical education and research institution. But the University of Iowa's medical education program did not start yesterday. It began in 1870 with the opening of the first co-educational medical school in the country. The decision to fund a medical school was very controversial in Iowa just as it is today in Idaho. In fact the governor vetoed funding a school in 1848 and it wasn't established for another 22 years. Realization of dreams can take a while even when the need is clear. In 1870 Iowa had a population of 1.2 million people and their leaders were far-sighted enough to realize that medical education was a long-term proposition. What started over 130 years ago has become the pride of the state of Iowa a recognized leader in medical technology and education and an economic engine that has spawned a community of medical and biotechnology industries and opportunities.

Of course, the most bizarre impediment to enhancing medical education in Idaho is the same as elsewhere: lack of funding and resources. For some reason we can find \$35 million for stadium press boxes but not \$35 million for critical needs. I am not one to advocate that the taxpayers should fund the initial investment. After all, the new medical education building in South Dakota only cost the taxpayers of South Dakota about \$1.8 million. The bulk of its cost was funded by philanthropy and student fees with a boost from the federal government.

It is time for the broad medical community throughout the state to live up to its promise and begin to support students in their educational endeavors, to support the Treasure Valley in developing a first-class medical and bioresearch industry and to provide leadership and resources for this important part of the Vision for the Valley.

Tom Ryder is a retired J.R. Simplot Co. executive who served as the editorial board's community representative in 2006 and 2007.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

A day to remember

Veterans, students gather in Shoshone to honor service

By Ariel Hansen

Times-News writer

Standing just inside the school entrance, the three men looked young enough to fit in with the high school students that flocked past into the gym. What set them apart was their desert camo and Army boots.

Spc. David Allen returned from a tour in Iraq this year, and Pvt. Cody Christensen and Pfc. James Hansen just finished basic training. They joined veterans from conflicts as far back as World War II - some brought from the nearby nursing home - as well as service members from Mountain Home Air Force Base and students of all grades in the Shoshone School gym on Tuesday morning to commemorate Veterans Day.

Allen, Christensen and Hansen were all students at Shoshone before they graduated and joined the service, and they said it was a privilege to join veterans for the event.

"I just want to say thank you to them," Christensen said. "They were our role models, and it's our turn to be someone else's role models."

With the bleachers full of red, white and blue shirts on the Shoshone students, the color scheme was echoed in the presentation of the colors by a team from Mountain Home and the lowering of a gigantic flag from the ceiling. Outside, a Black Hawk helicopter from the Air Force base sat on a knoll, where students would later have a chance to gawk and ask questions of the helicopter's crew.

There were several presentations and speeches at the sixth annual event, highlighted by the presentation of a flag and photo by Idaho National Guard 1st Lt. Nathan Patrick to Jackie Owens' fifth-grade class. The flag flew last Christmas Day with Patrick's unit, engaged in conflict in the Middle East, and he presented it to the class to thank the students for writing letters and sending care packages to the soldiers overseas. He chose a flag that flew on a holiday to remind those who see it of the soldiers' sacrifices.

"When you're home celebrating Thanksgiving this year, or Christmas, sitting down to watch football, remember there are people dying on that same day," Patrick said.

Especially touching to several of the veterans in attendance was when the third-, fourth- and fifth-grade music students sang "You're a Grand Old Flag."

"When it comes to the pride of your country, that has no age limit," said Tom Seiberling of Jerome, who served in the Coast Guard and came to the Veterans Day event with Gary Stough of Wendell, a Navy veteran, and Bob Riese of Twin Falls, who served in the Marines. All three

were decked out in motorcycle leathers, and sported "Veterans of Freedom" motorcycle club T-shirts.

The Vietnam-era veterans said the country's attitudes toward veterans have changed dramatically since their service.

"Back in the '70s we weren't shown respect, and it's nice to see it now," Riese said. The trio was interrupted by troops and Girl Scouts stopping by to shake hands and thank the veterans for their service.

"To me it brings a lot of joy to know people still honor the country," Seiberling said.

Educators await changes from Obama

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

The campaign promises were made, the ballots were counted, and a new president promising to bring change was elected.

For Idaho educators, now comes the unpredictable part: waiting to see when education policy changes are made, and what the final impact will be on south-central Idaho schools of a Barack Obama presidency.

Area education officials say they're aware that issues like the economy and war in Iraq have dominated the political landscape more than education did during the campaign.

Even so, they would like to see improvements in the testing systems made necessary by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Obama has pledged to reform the law, improve student assessments, and provide support for schools needing improvement.

Superintendents are not expecting to see overnight changes in education policies.

"Of course, there is a lot of work to do," said Wiley Dobbs, superintendent of Twin Falls School District. "These things don't materialize the day after a president takes office."

Dobbs expressed the need to move to a NCLB testing model that's more focused on measuring each individual student's growth from one year to the next instead of one benchmark that applies to all students without any distinctions.

Dobbs also sees potential benefits from Obama's "Zero to Five Plan," which would create grants and help states move toward voluntary preschool programs. Obama also wants to double funding for the 21st Century Learning Centers program. That's the source of federal dollars for after-school activities in Twin Falls School District, which serves 200-plus elementary students.

Scott Rogers, superintendent of Minidoka County School District, said there needs to be a look at the accountability system that is part of the framework of NCLB. Federal requirements should be workable mandates instead of unfunded mandates that make educators feel like failures if a school falls short in just one testing category out of dozens, Rogers said.

"I'm not opposed to accountability," he said. "It's just the way you do it."

Gaylen Smyer, superintendent of Cassia County School District, isn't sure what will happen, though he anticipates that NCLB will get a look.

Jerome School District Superintendent Jim Cobble said he believes the NCLB requirements likely would have received some scrutiny from a new president regardless of the election's outcome.

"I think whether Obama had won or whether McCain had won, I felt like there would be maybe some turnaround and a little more support on issues with NCLB," Cobble said. "I think it was inevitable there would have been some adjustments and attention no matter who the president-elect was."

John Graham, superintendent of Filer School District, said movement has already been in place to look at a growth model for NCLB testing, adding that he believes that would have been the case if McCain won.

The current NCLB system, he said, doesn't adequately factor in students such as those with special needs and those learning to speak English while in school.

"It will be interesting how quickly that is addressed because there are many issues facing the country," Graham said. "There's probably nothing more important than education, however with some serious issues the president has on his plate it may take a little bit before he ratchets up to go after that."

Barbara Thronson, Richfield School District superintendent, is optimistic Obama's interest in renewable power sources like wind turbines and solar energy will help schools become involved in those efforts, with grant opportunities for energy projects.

"I also think there will be money for young people to work in the green movement and learn more about sustainability: solar and wind and hydrogen," she said, adding that she supports the concept of a growth model for testing.

Mark Browning, spokesman for the Idaho State Board of Education, said the new Congress, not just a new president, also will play a role in education reform efforts.

"We will work with Idaho's congressional delegation to try to make sure it fits the needs of Idaho's students the best it possibly can," Browning said. "Anything on a federal level doesn't move swiftly. That's probably by design if you really think about it. It's specially designed to be

cumbersome and move slowly so you don't get poorly enacted legislation that just comes off a whim."

Sherri Wood, president of the Idaho Education Association, said she's in favor of Obama's plans to overhaul the NCLB legislation that punishes schools that don't reach a certain test score. She also likes Obama's interest in investing in preschool education and the president-elect's plans to boost the recruitment and retention of teachers.

"The key is all of us working together," Wood said.

Obama's education promises

- Reform the No Child Left Behind Act by funding the law, improve student assessments, and support schools needing improvement.
- Zero to Five Plan: create grants that help state efforts for early care and education for children up to 5 years old.
- Double funding for the 21st Century Learning Centers program, the main federal support for after-school programs, including those in Idaho.
- Scholarships to recruit teachers, expanded mentoring programs for new teachers, increased pay for teachers who serve as mentors, work in underserved areas like inner cities and rural regions, reward teachers who consistently excel in their work.

Source: <http://www.barackobama.com>

Twin Falls High gym project starts soon

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

The new Canyon Ridge High School isn't the only high school in Twin Falls that has construction work planned for the coming months.

Work will begin as soon as next week on a construction project at Twin Falls High School that will connect the school's two gymnasiums and add two locker rooms.

The Twin Falls School District's board on Monday night accepted a \$2.23 million bid from Beniton Construction Company for the project. Besides new locker rooms, other features in the 10,000-square-foot addition include a concessions and ticket sales area and new restrooms.

"It's going to definitely improve the attractiveness of that end of the building," said Dale Thornsberry, the district's facilities manager. He said the work may start on Monday.

When Canyon Ridge High School opens in the fall of 2009, both high schools will add ninth-grade students. With the additional students and ninth-grade sports teams, that will create a need for more locker rooms and space, Thornsberry said.

The construction project is expected to be ready when school starts in fall 2009.

The improvement is part of the \$49.7 million school bond issue that voters passed in March 2006.

ISU braces for more cuts in state spending

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The university has about 70 vacant positions and will fill only "high priority" jobs critical to the operation and mission of the eastern Idaho school, said James Fletcher, ISU vice president for finance and administration.

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University President Arthur Vailas said he plans to give faculty monthly updates on the school's financial status.

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Information from: Idaho State Journal, <http://www.journalnet.com>

A service of the Associated Press(AP)

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

X is for xeriscaping

Local eighth-graders hope to help state solve climate problems

BY CASEY SANTEE

csantee@journalnet.com

POCATELLO — Eighth-graders Dana Drecksell and Julianne Collet say the state could likely increase the water supply for farmers by subsidizing residential xeriscaping.

The pair are part of a five-student team at Irving Middle School working to solve climate problems. The duo are in charge of research, while the other three members of Team Quasar are responsible for building a small robot that will perform climate-related missions.

Dana and Julianne, both 13, will present their findings to judges at a local competition in early December. The general topic assignment is to investigate climate problems, and after looking into the matter, they chose to focus on xeriscaping as a local solution to the dry Eastern Idaho environment.

"In some other states, the government pays for people to xeriscape their yards," Julianne said. "We're hoping Idaho will do that."

Dana added that even if the state doesn't fund residential xeriscaping, homeowners can still benefit by employing the landscaping system.

"You save money on sprinkler systems and (water)," Dana said. "And on top of that, it looks beautiful so there's no reason not to do it."

Xeriscaping is landscaping that requires little or no water other than that provided by precipitation. In Eastern Idaho, it often includes drought-resistant grasses as well as both native and non-native plants that thrive in arid climates.

Dana and Julianne suggest that homeowners who want to save money, time and work should use perennials that don't have to be replaced every season. The girls also recommend plants that are naturally insect resistant to reduce the need for environmentally unfriendly pesticides.

Team Quasar's robot will perform pre-programed tasks that simulate climate-related missions, such as testing a miniature levy. The project is part of School District 25's GATE, or Gifted And Talented Education program.

If the team makes the cut locally, the students will travel to Coeur d'Alene to compete at the state level. Last year, about 20 district teams competed and Julianne's team was one which advanced to the state competition.

Marsh Valley High school earns ayp award

ARIMO — The Idaho State Board of Education recognized Marsh Valley High School at an Oct. 9 meeting for earning the state's Additional Yearly Growth Award based on its spring 2008 Idaho Standards Achievement Test.

Marsh Valley was just one of 18 schools in the state to earn the distinction for 2008, according to a press release.

To honor each employee in the district who helped make the award possible, the district hosted a meeting on Tuesday to recognize their contributions.

Marsh Valley Principal Mike Welch, Marsh Valley Joint School District 21 Superintendent Marvin Hansen and Board Chairman Rick Armstrong expressed appreciation and congratulations for all of the hard work and dedication of the staff.

ISU takes steps to increase student, professor interaction

BY YANN RANAIVO
yranaivo@journalnet.com

POCATELLO — Idaho State University has created a new program designed to increase interaction between students and their professors.

The hope of the new program, called "Be Advised," is to improve the university's student retention rate. Professors will be charged with providing advising sessions for students.

The campaign was launched at about the same time as the state released retention and graduation figures for each of the three major universities in Idaho. Although ISU requires freshmen to schedule advising appointments before registering for spring classes, the State Board of Education reported that ISU had the lowest freshmen retention rate of all three big state universities.

Fifty-seven percent of ISU's freshmen in 2007 went on to become sophomores at the institution. Boise State University reported a 67 percent retention rate while the University of Idaho retained 78 percent of its freshmen.

However, ISU was the only major university since 2005 to increase the number of students who enrolled and graduated within six years. The university's graduation rate rose to 31 percent in 2008 from 22 percent in 2005.

ISU officials previously credited the increase in graduates to increased opportunities for advising.

"Advising is very much a key to keeping students interested," said JoAnn Hertz, the director for academic advising and support. "And it makes more sense (to be advised) because it goes back to the idea of developing a relationship."

Hertz said advising is important for students because it helps them stay focused on their majors and builds a greater interest in their disciplines.

She said freshmen and firstsemester transfer students are the only groups that are required to be advised, and several students often end up switching majors multiple times before graduating, thereby ending a college career prematurely or making it longer than intended.

Using statistics from the National Academic Advising Association, Hertz said most students consider switching majors between three to six times during college.

“If the person gets advised every semester, they can much better narrow down their choices. There are some people who go through their whole college career without getting advised,” Hertz said. “What happens is that some students are very successful, and then there are some students who may have benefited from talking to their advisers. And it’s not just about scheduling (an advising appointment), but also building an appreciation of their discipline.”

By seeking advice, Hertz said students find help with their career choices and become better informed about the necessary coursework.

One example, she said, is that ISU offers only up to eight physical education credits. She said students sometimes take more physical education classes than the university can credit and miscalculate their total course credits when they get ready to graduate.

Starting a career shortly after graduating has also become an increasing problem.

“It’s also a networking place,” Hertz said of the new sessions. “The faculty members can see the students so they can also network and recommend them into certain fields.”

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

The Voters have spoken

Jerome A. Pollos / Associated Press - Bob Shamberg, principal of Borah Elementary School, juggles while wearing a ballerina outfit Monday during lunch in Coeur d'Alene. Students voted for Shamberg to either kiss a pig or wear a ballerina outfit at school during an election day event. The ballerina option won over a pig kiss 203-156 in the student polls.

ISU braces for more cuts in spending

The university has around 70 vacant positions, but will only be filling critical jobs.

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